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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 002181

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/30/2007

TAGS: PGOV PREL ZI

SUBJECT: LOCAL AUSTRALIAN TAKE ON ABUJA MEETING ON ZIMBABWE

REF: A. (A) CANBERRA 2038

1B. (B) LONDON 6903

1C. (C) ABUJA 2766

Classified By: JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN FOR REASONS 1.5B/D

11. (C) Australian High Commissioner to Harare Jonathan Brown gave us a readout of the Abuja meeting, which he attended. His account was largely consistent with reftel accounts so we will only report that which provides additional elaboration or contrast. Brown said that the three presidents had agreed that there were no positive developments in Zimbabwe since the Marlborough House decision of six months ago and no GOZ effort to meet the concerns expressed by the Troika six months ago. He also cited the "weak" position taken by President Mbeki as determinative, noting that Prime Minister Howard had met with President Obasanjo before the meeting and had heard some willingness to go along with suspension of Zimbabwe. But following his separate meeting with Mbeki, Obasanjo did not buck Mbeki's wish to let six more months pass. Brown said that Obasanjo conveyed to Howard that Mugabe had called Mbeki in advance of the meeting and gave him a major dose of invective re the upcoming Abuja meeting. Obasanjo also conveyed from his own conversation with Mugabe that Mugabe had expressed satisfaction that the land reform exercise was almost completed and that he would step down for a new election if the MDC were to win its court case. While the Australians had done much prior coordination with the South African Foreign Ministry, they were not present in Abuja and Mbeki's personal advisers were clearly pre-eminent.

2.(C) HC Brown described allegations that Mugabe was improperly invited as a canard. The draft letter of invitation had been showed to Mbeki and Obasanjo in advance for their approval and they had agreed to the date of its delivery. It was delivered under cover of a diplomatic note in early September according to standard practice.

13. (C) Brown said that the next step would be Troika action to renew Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth six months hence. In the absence of Troika action to extend suspension, the current suspension would lapse. Brown said that UK PM Blair had indicated to PM Howard his intention to write SADC Presidents reminding them of the importance of acting on Zimbabwe for NEPAD to succeed.

14. (C) Re the assertion in para eleven of ref c that all farmers have been left with one farm, this is always said by the GOZ, but patently untrue in many hundreds of cases. Parliamentary Speaker Mnangagwa recently acknowledged to the Ambassador that while a few provinces had largely abided by that standard, rampant disregard for that criteria had been the rule in the rich Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland East provinces among others,

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SULLIVAN